

**In a nutshell:  
 SB 284  
 &  
 Historic  
 Properties**



Every year, Montana Preservation Alliance receives calls for help from across the state, from private and public owners of historic barns, business buildings, schools, and more. Our most pressing need at this time is to provide support to communities who hope to preserve but need funding to help. Many other states offer such assistance, and were there an annual source of funding to help owners preserve properties, many more buildings in our state would be saved.

SB 284 boosts funds for Heritage & Tourism in many ways, providing much needed support for Travel Montana, our Tourism Countries, Community Visitor Bureaus and the Indian Tribal Tourism Alliance. It provides important funding support to our most cherished heritage programs – Montana's Historical Society, Cultural Trust, Heritage Commission and State Parks.

And in addition, SB 284 provides *new* Historic Properties funding that will help people across Montana to preserve heritage sites and buildings, support local businesses, museums, historical societies & arts groups to develop heritage tourism programs. Under SB284, with the proposed funding of \$525,000 as proposed, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) envisions it will:

**Montana Legacy Grant Program**

- **\$300,000 Offer Annual Matching Grants** for Historic Brick-and-Mortar Projects, Heritage Property Surveys & Stewardship Initiatives, Local Preservation Offices, Archaeology and Indian Heritage activities.
- **\$100,000 Reach Out to Communities Statewide** with much-needed Training, On-site Workshops, Programs & Hands-on Preservation assistance helping to develop Heritage Interpretive and Cultural Tourism resources.

**Build a Stronger and More Effective Montana SHPO**

- **\$125,000 Assist public efforts through a strong & effective SHPO**, including expanded Rural Heritage and National Register of Historic Places staff, an updated MT Antiquities Database, support for State Agency Stewardship of state-owned Heritage Properties, and actively pursue Outside Grants for historic preservation projects.



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# Bonanza!

Proposed heritage trail in JeffCo would tap rich history, culture of area

By MARGA LINCOLN  
IR Staff Writer

**B**OULDER — Artisans and small business owners gathered at Boulder Hot Springs last week to plan launching a southwestern Montana heritage trail system, tentatively labeled the Bonanza Trail.

In the coming year, crafts people, ranchers and farmers, artisans and history buffs will be invited to be part of an effort to create a map and directory of heritage destinations in southwest Montana.

The maps and guides invite tourism and help local businesses and artists to promote themselves.

"This program really offers a lot of hope to real Montanans that they can stay living in their hometowns and that they can do what they love

continuing to ranch and keep their lifestyle intact," said Chere Jiusto, executive director of the Montana Preservation Alliance.

Folks in the Great Falls area launched the first heritage trail in Montana, Hands of Harvest, in 2004. Their glossy, richly illustrated guide and map entice visitors to explore galleries, studios, museums, historic sites, heritage events and unique ranch businesses along six different routes radiating from Great Falls.

That group is already revising its directory to add additional loops and businesses, said Jiusto. And for some farms and ranches, it's helped them earn \$5,000 to \$10,000 in additional income per year, which helps families stay on the land.

Heritage trails are part of a growing tourism niche.

National tourism figures from 2001 show that \$3.721 billion, annually, is attributed to heritage travel spending, said Rolene Schliesman of the Montana Historical Society.

And in Montana, the Hands of Harvest project provided a unique economic development spin-off, in addition to the tourism boon.

One of the organizers of the guide, Cindy Kittredge, now offers a program at the Montana State University Great Falls campus, teaching business and marketing classes to small business owners.

The draft plan for the Southwest Montana Heritage Trails includes seven trails or loops, aimed at drawing visitors from popular gateways, such as West Yellowstone and Butte-Anaconda, to venture into nearby rural areas of Montana.

The proposed trails are:

- the Vigilante Trail from West Yellowstone that takes in Virginia and Nevada cities en route to Butte;

- the Boulder Valley Loop, from Butte to Whitehall then up the Boulder River to Boulder and back through Elk Park to Whitehall;



## Southwest Montana Cultural Tourism Loops

- Boulder Valley Loop
- Tobacco Root Mtn. Loop
- Pioneer Byway Loop
- Vigilante Trail
- Sacagawea Loop
- Big Hole Loop
- Red Rock Lakes Loop

## SB 284, Best Place First

A bill calling for revising sales tax proceeds to enhance tourism promotion, including cultural and historic tourism, goes to public hearing Feb. 6 at 3 p.m.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Lynda Moss, D-Billings, will be heard by the Senate Local Government Committee.

west of Dillon through the Sacagawea Historical area;

- the Tobacco Root Mountain Loop, encompassing the Lewis and Clark Caverns to Ennis, then through Twin Bridges and back to the Whitehall area;

- the Red Rock Lakes Loop from West Yellowstone to Dillon and circling through the Red Rocks Lake National Wildlife Refuge;

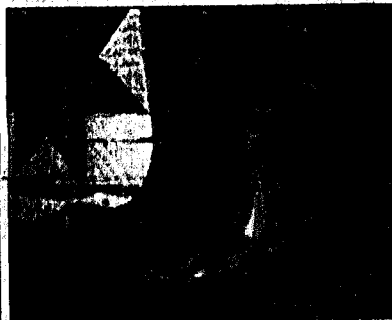
- the Big Hole Loop, leaving Dillon, heading to Bannack, following the Big Hole River and circling back to Dillon via Divide and Melrose; and

- the Pioneer Byway Loop, a

Loop, which travels along the Wise River.

The trails are meant to help the economies of small towns, said Mary Holt of Dillon, one of the local volunteer planners of the Bonanza Trail. They are working to line up a host of events, historic places, bed-and-breakfasts, agricultural and cultural sites that would be listed in the directory and on the map.

"It (heritage tourism) ties local development to heritage preservation," said Jiusto. It's modeled after the successful Handmade in America program based in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina.



Jon Holt IR Staff Photographer

**Silk artist Caroleen Vaughan** of Boulder is the volunteer coordinator/project manager for the Southwest Montana or Bonanza Trail project.

artists and ties in local cultural events and venues and historical sites.

"One advantage of this approach is it's completely locally driven. It starts with people who want to reach out and encourage more visitors to the area. If you want to be on the loop, you can sign on," said Jiusto.

Montana Preservation Alliance has been a moving force to help launch the trails, sponsoring workshops and writing grants.

Some of the historic treasures the proposed trails would feature include Bannack, Virginia City, the Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site and Butte-Anaconda, said Jiusto. In addition, they'll take in the Beaverhead County Historical Museum, the Lima Historical Society, Basin's Montana Artists Refuge and Boulder Hot Springs.

"The work of the local people is to create a really big list of sites and businesses," said Jiusto.

"They not only launch a trail, but they launch a program that ensures quality," she said.

Silk artist Caroleen Vaughan of Boulder, is the volunteer coordinator/project manager for the Southwest Montana or Bonanza Trail project.

She's playing with the name of calling the Southwest Tourism Loops the Bonanza Trail, she said, because it's a mining term, and the area is rich in mining history.

There is also a rich vein of creativity to tap. "We're mining the motherlode of southwest Montana artists and craft artists," she said.

She sees the heritage trail and directory as a way to welcome visitors, whether they travel from down the road, the neighboring county, across the United States or from overseas.

The group's next meeting is April 18 in Twin Bridges. Guest speakers will be from the Montana Film Office and the Montana Arts Council. To learn more about the heritage trail, e-mail Vaughan at Her-